



Carolina DX Association

January 1999

The Pileup

Newsletter of the CDXA

Bob Burton N4PQX	President
Cliff Wagoner W4WN	Vice-President
Gary Dixon K4MQG	Sec.-Tres.
Don Daso K4ZA	Editor

CDXA PacketCluster & other communications systems			
W4DXA Young Mountain	144.93	(1200 baud) & 441.00	(1200/9600 baud)
K4MD Charlotte, NC	144.91	(1200 baud) & 441.075	(1200/9600 baud)
digi-peater near Wingate, NC		DXWIN	144.91
repeater 147.18 (+600) near Fort Mill, SC			
homepage < www.cdxa.org >			

MEET THE PRESIDENT

Bob Burton, N4PQX, is 38 years old, an NC State grad (BSEE), married, and works for McKesson HBOC, Inc., (a world leader in healthcare services), in their healthcare information systems area as a Systems Software Programmer. Bob was originally licensed in 1987 with the novice call KB4WLE. He upgraded to technician in early 1988 and received N4PQX. He upgraded to General in early 1993, then to Extra by mid-1993. Bob kept N4PQX as it's the only call he's ever used on the air. In August 1997, Bob has earned 5B-DXCC, has 20M WAZ, and plans on turning in his 15M WAZ at the Charlotte Hamfest. He should also qualify for over 300 countries for DXCC, contingent on the arrival of QSLs from some recent operations. Bob's also an ARRL and W5YI Volunteer Examiner.

I'd say 300 countries in four years is pretty good. Bob's obviously serious about DXing. His computer and software skills may come in handy, too, for the club. His first Presidential Ponderings was simply too long for the front page of The Pileup, however. Check inside for some of Bob's ideas & plans for CDXA. —K4ZA

A Few Words About Rope

Most hams use rope only a few times—usually for tower & antenna work. As such, they're not usually concerned about it. Serious hams (like contesters & DXers) are, however, so these few words may help you choose & use rope properly.

Climbing & caving ropes are available from a variety of sources, perhaps even locally. Sheathed rope (known as kermantle, or braid-on-braid) will last for years. A cheap, polypropylene rope will work well for tag line use; you won't feel badly if you have to cut it, either, since they're inexpensive. The spin or "lay" of a rope means how the rope is wound or braided. All ropes will spin in use, some are simply more prone to spinning than others. That's one reason kermantle ropes are easier to use—braided ropes have a neutral lay & spin less. You should handle any rope you plan to use before you buy it to determine the suppleness of the rope. Soft ropes take knots (as well as hold them) much more easily than hard ropes. You will, of course, need a rope that's twice the height of your tower (plus some extra to work with) for hauling purposes. You'll need more than that, usually, for trolley purposes. Check K7LXC's "Up The Tower" column in the NCJ for March/April, 1992, for a chart of rope sizes & safe working loads, before you buy anything.

PRESIDENTIAL PONDERINGS

A new year is underway and we start it off with a major DX-pedition from ZL9CI. I hope everyone is in the log. If you missed the meeting and election in December, check out the masthead. I look forward to serving as CDXA's President this year, and if the propagation experts are correct, 1999 will be a great year for DXers everywhere.

We start off by reminding you that club dues are now, well...due. We have included a self-addressed envelope for your convenience in remitting the monies to K4MQG. We've also attached an information form and ask you to fill this out so we can check our files and update the roster. You can e-mail this information to K4MQG or K4ZA if you wish. I encourage all of you with Internet access to start reading *The Pileup* on the CXDA website. With the rising costs of producing and mailing this newsletter, you can directly help the club reduce our yearly expenses by using the website. Please indicate if you can do this on the information card or e-mail K4ZA directly. We'd like to have more events during the year, but that will depend on our budget.

Another issue we face this year is preparing for the year 2000. We're establishing a group to work on year 2000 issues. K4MD and K4DXA have volunteered to work on this important project. This project includes testing our PacketCluster system hardware and software as well as providing information to our members on how to test their own equipment. The computer hardware you own and the software you use may or may not be year 2000 compliant. Any members who can help Joe and Ken are encouraged to volunteer their time and expertise. Contact your officers to volunteer for this project.

The Charlotte hamfest is coming soon—March 13-14, specifically. We're working on plans for the CDXA booth and the Saturday night social event. We'll have our continuously-running slice show at the booth again this year, which always draws a lot of attention to our booth. We need your help! Please submit a color slide of your station to be included in the show. We also want to post pictures of your station on the website. If you don't have pictures of your station, let us know and we'll arrange for some to be taken. This year, the W4BFB club has a special pre-registration parking pass available for only \$3—good for BOTH days. Take advantage of this and pre-register for the hamfest. I hope to meet all of you there.

Just a reminder of upcoming major contests. I hope many of you participate. If you do, please mark your log as club competition for CDXA, and send your score to Cliff, W4WN, so he can tally the club total. This year is the first time in a few years the ARRL International DX phone contest will not conflict with the hamfest, so take advantage and participate. Then tell us all about your contest fun at the hamfest.

CQ 160M CW Contest	Jan. 29-31
ARRL International DX CW Contest	Feb. 20-21
CQ 160M Phone Contest	Feb. 26-28
ARRL International DX Phone Contest	Mar. 6-7

I'd like to thank our 1997 officers, K4MD, W4WN, K4MQG, along with K4ZA. I'd also like to thank N4ZC and all the volunteer sorters who work in the W4-bureau. And of course, thanks to all who worked hard to upgrade and maintain our PacketCluster. Joe, K4MD, and many others have spent lots of time and effort upgrading several of us to 9600 baud this past year. We appreciate their efforts. I look forward to serving you—the Club membership—this year. I know it sounds overly political, and we've all probably had enough of that for a while, but I'm looking for your input, ideas, and help. Let's make 1999 a great year for the CDXA!

73 Bob, N4PQX

DX Forum at 1999 Charlotte Hamfest

The CDXA has assisted the W4BFB club with what promises to be another good DX program for the annual Charlotte Hamfest. Wayne Mills, N7NG, will be the Guest Speaker at the Charlotte Hamfest and Computer Fair on March 13 & 14, 1999.

Wayne is currently the ARRL DXAC Chairman and will participate in a Forum to discuss the DXCC 2000 rules. He will also present a program on the DXpedition to the Temoto Province as H40AA. Wayne will possibly mention one or two of the other DXpeditions he has been on, as well. He may mention a few things covered in his book on DXpeditioning. In other words, if you've ever *even thought* about working DX in your ham radio life, it would behoove you to attend this Forum.

—K4MQG

EDITORIAL

As readers, you may think (or believe) *The Pileup* is built willy-nilly, without rhyme or reason, or you may think the whole year's planned out in advance. The truth is, most of the issue is "in flux" right up until the 10th of the month.

Like any editor, I'm always on the alert for ideas, tips, suggestions, even entire articles. Like any editor, I always want to hear from readers, whether a complaint or a comment or even praise. Most editors, as I say, will tell you this. In my case, I'm not making any great confession, or concession. I *need* your input. There are, of course, several ways to contact me. So, that's the message of this editorial—I want to hear from you, the members.

The Pileup is intended to serve the needs of the membership of The Carolina DX Association. That's so obvious, I hesitated to type it. And yet, (*gosh it's hard to type all this*), I find it hard, incredibly hard, to say. I'm not claiming to have my finger on the pulse of the collective membership, let alone ham radio at large. But about 150 of you should be asking yourselves why Don creates 10 issues a year as well as writing a website. You should be asking yourselves what you could do to help the club. You should be telling the officers what you'd like them to do (you elected them, but that's not enough). You should be doing something for the club. I've heard there were complaints at the CDXA Christmas Party regarding *The Pileup*. To wit, that people did not receive e-mails regarding the December issue. Ahhhh, guys, for three years now we haven't HAD issues in June or December. So, no, you didn't receive any publication notice. This schedule is designed to provide a respite during obviously busy times in my work life, as well as save the club a little money. The newsletter remains the single, largest expense we have. I feel guilty every single time I present K4MQG with the printing and postage bills—because it's a significant expense (Right now, the club treasury is basically empty, perhaps not the best way to begin any New Year, but, that's our situation.) And one we can further reduce if more folks would read their newsletters on-line. It's such a simple request, really it is. Considering the rapid proliferation of computers into every facet of everyday life, it doesn't seem that radical a request, either.

This is the Information Age, in case you've forgotten, or missed the message. We all have a stake in that future, of course. We needn't get so caught up with technology that we forget the real mission (if you will) of hamming—to communicate, on-the-air, using our radios. And for most of us, that means communicating as far as possible, working new, exotic, foreign, as-yet-unworked folks. The process, of course, is what's important in all this.

Pogo saw the future, and it was a sobering experience. It's certainly electronic in nature. And that should be enlivening, even enlightening, for each of us, as hams. It means that computer usage will continue to increase, that the sharing of knowledge and information and ideas will go on. Ham radio remains one of the best—most personal and intimate—ways to do that.

Consider this an inaugural speech, and ask not what the CDXA can do for you, but ask what you might do for the club, and act accordingly. Happy New Year!

--K4ZA

THOUGHTS ON MY BQ9P ATTEMPT

At one time, I had worked all the ARRL countries. But then swiftly, there was North Korea, the "Rock," Pratis, Marquesas, Astral, & Temotu; I was down six! I picked up Marquesas & Temotu, & then Pratis was coming up. I had to work them! Alas, tragedy struck near September's end. My TH-7 was showing a high SWR on 20M, although 15M & 10M were normal. No big problem, as I have a 58 foot Rohn tilt-over tower, which brings the antenna to about two feet above the ground, & parallel to it, where it's easy to work on.

I went through the preliminaries of preparing the tower for tilting over, one of which is to connect a wire cable to its point on the tilt-over boom, & secured it with a cable clamp. The other end of the cable goes to a winch on the bottom of the tower. It's necessary to get the top movable section off its neutral position before it can be swung over to start its descent. I do that by connecting a rope to the bottom of the tilt-over boom, providing slack from the winch to the wire cable, then pulling the movable section off balance slightly, starting it on its downward travel, with the winch taking up the slack. That's where the trouble started! This time, I did a lousy job securing the clamp, so the wire slipped through, & the upper tower started an uncontrollable descent. I panicked, held on to the rope to try to stop the tower's fall, only letting go when the pain became unbearable. The ER put in five stitches on one finger, & bandaged the rope burn on the others neatly. The following week we left for two weeks vacation in England.

The TH-7 had too much damage to repair in the two weeks after our return before Pratis came on, so I put up a 20M, $\frac{1}{4}$ -wave vertical with above-ground radials in the front yard. That gave me 20 & 40 meters—I also have a $\frac{1}{4}$ -wave vertical on 40M. I did my homework with MINIPROP+ to get the propagation predictions for the best times for 40 & 20. Without the TH-7, I had no 15M or 10M capability.

As I remember it, there must have been a 20M opening Wednesday evening, November 11, local time, as they started 0000Z November 12th. Roger, N4ZC, said he worked them that evening. I started at 5 AM the next day, an hour I hate for arising, but there was BQ9P coming through on 40M CW, just a whisper. He wasn't strong enough for me to work even by the rhythm method—where if he comes back when you sign, & the report timing seems appropriate, you may have worked him.

Of course the condition we all fear appeared—a solar flare with the K-index going to six occurred. The polar path to Pratis was gone. So that evening, the 12th, I worked E30GA on 20M for a new prefix. The next morning, up again at 5 AM to a dead band, but I had to work something, so I worked T32VU just for fun. That evening there was still no path to Pratis, so I took advantage of my airtime by working 4N6IOTA, and CU/DL2DVE (CU0), for two new prefixes. By Sunday, solar conditions had improved, Pratis began to come in again. I heard their SSB signals around 7080 simplex having a great time working all kinds of DX. I even heard a W station break-in with "Work Stateside," but it didn't work. I never did hear them on 40M after that for all my getting up at 5 AM! But much to my delight, I heard K4MQG work them on 80M SSB one morning. I could hear a murmur on their transmitting frequency, but again, even the rhythm technique wouldn't have worked, as too many folks were calling.

So, from Sunday on, it was 20M where I heard them on CW & SSB, evening & morning, where I called them using every trick I knew. I heard them come back to AA4R, K4SI, & W4UW, just to name three locals I remember, but no N4UH. On their last morning, I got up again at 5 AM, too early for Pratis, but I did have nice chats with VU2AU, VU2CK, & A61AM, all long path, on 20M, but using the rhombic. Back to 40M, but no Pratis. I did have a nice chat with JA4AHV at 7:15 local. So a path was open, & I was getting through, but no Pratis.

On the last evening, I don't know how Pratis was coming through because I had to go to a church meeting with my wife. I know, I know—a true DXer would have forsaken his wife's wishes, so I have been un-masked. I'm sorry! I realize it will probably be many years before Pratis Island comes on the air again. If there are any of you who didn't work it, let us all grieve together. But let's also congratulate those who did, even though we know they will say, "It was so easy!"

--N4UH

Thoughts on the ARRL 1998 10M Contest operation from N4ZC

The following article contains adult language and graphic descriptions. If you are easily offended by such content and situations, you are advised to proceed no further.

First, thanks are due to W4VHF, AA4NN, and W4WN for their antenna/tower work efforts at the N4ZC station. My work schedule, Roger's health, and other circumstances beyond our control prevented us from getting the station in top shape for the contest. I've done well in the Mixed-Mode category at the bottom of the cycle from Roger's place, and was eager to see what would happen this year, with conditions improving. Alas, a Friday afternoon checkout showed the CW antenna's SWR was infinite (probably a bad hardline connector or bad cable—too big a project to fix in a few minutes), so I decided to run Phone only, figuring I'd work more people and have higher rates and so on. The final hour before the contest was thus spent tearing down the two radio (TS-850/830) setup and installing my big, home computer. (A teleprompter laptop from work, which served so well at PJ8Z, locked up whenever I turned it on.) A quick WWV time check and propagation forecast, then away we go, with W6YX first in the log (there's some irony here, so pay attention). The rate's nothing to write home about, but it's the only contest in town. I end the evening (Rog protests I'm quitting too early) with 162 QSOs and 15 countries, along with most of the sometimes-difficult Western states.

Saturday dawns too damn early, but I manage to stumble over to the station, figuring the Europeans will certainly wake me up. I swing the high beam to 90 degrees and I8QLS is loud in the 850's passband when I bring up the gain. Naturally, he can't hear me. Nor can any of the other big EU signals I'm copying, until I work TM1C at 1159 Zulu. The rate climbs steadily and I switch to the stack by 1330 Zulu, when I no longer hear a difference on signals by switching, leaving the high beam on Africa. The band never "feels" like 10M, meaning while signals are loud, *they're not loud enough*, nor do they possess any special clarity from the good signal-to-noise ratio of 10M. Maybe *next year*? I persevere in spite of this tremendous handicap, and such goodies as 9J, A22, 5H3, Z3, LX, TA, and OD go into the log. I vowed to change frequencies a lot in this contest—believing I could better maximize my rate by running the *hoi polloi* above 28.500 when the rate to EU dropped off. I search and pounce on the second VFO while CQing on the primary VFO when the run slows, too. (From 1300-1600Z, I have 140, 160, 160, & 100/hours, making Saturday a good day.) I work all states by 2100 Zulu, with an abundance of AK/HI stations. I end the day with 71 countries and a total of 1209 QSOs. Again, Rog complains I'm quitting too early; I rationalize I need some rest. I head home in the rain, figuring that at least the weather will help eliminate the noise.

Sunday happens, meaning there is no dawn, to speak of, just more rain. Enough so there's going to be precipitation static, which is worse than the damn egg-frying sound from a sun-filled sky (the blanker cuts that). The rate is nil. I start CQing at 11:30 on 550, and finally, W3PP calls in at 11:50. Then, the AL-1200 goes dead. Rog is still asleep, I can't find a VOM, and then I remember I've got a trusty old Simpson 260 in my pickup. A quick check shows the amp fuses are okay, so I slide my Henry into place. It's dead. Rog clumps into the shack as I'm sticking screwdrivers into the AC socket to check the voltage (the old Simpson test leads use alligator clips). Ahhh, there's no 220. I'm immediately depressed, pissed off, and frustrated. Rog says he's had this problem for a while, but finally reminds me we once *were* a M-M station and have other 220 outlets. *Duh. Sparky, wake up and think* and other choice epithets, I tell myself, and frantically slide stuff around so the AL-1200's cord can reach another outlet, after a second fast screwdriver-in-the-socket test proves that one is good.

10M Test, continued

By 12:15, I'm CQing once more on 559 and slip into the old familiar rhythm, with four straight 100/hours. By 1700, things are too slow, so I do a quick S&P check, while looking for a new frequency. I dial my way up the band, looking for a home. Finally, up in nosebleed country, at 28.708, I find a clear spot. Cursing myself for getting into this situation, I call CQ and someone actually answers. I spend three hours on this frequency, mostly in amazement, working 90/hour. When the rate slows, I do the usual S&P across the band, finding 402 clear. I move there, and the rate goes up again. After three more successful hours, W6YX (he's that bit of irony) moves on to the frequency and won't go away. Finally, I swallow my pride and move. I do everything I can to keep the rate up. I call CQ on every antenna I've got, rotating the 6-el as much as possible, working every CDXA member who calls in (thanks, guys!), and try to wear out the voice keyer button, looking for Qs. As often happens, the pre-contest goal (in this case, 2200 Qs and 160 mults) suddenly becomes overwhelmingly real. I just *know* I can get to 2000 Qs and I just *know* I can work 100 countries. I have 1900 Qs and 99/100 countries/mults when I make this determination. The adrenaline kicks in. The rate is slow, but the numbers don't lie—the total will work out. It's that damned missing country. Where am I to find the elusive missing multiplier now? The JA run, while solid for a Sunday night, proved yet again the band wasn't really there yet—signals were watery, just not that strong. Then, as often happens at the ZC station (it's a good DX location), RA0FF calls in with #100. The rate to W6/W7 continues. And, for some added icing-on-the-cake, I work T88II (thanks to N4PQX, who shouted locally, which I tail-ended) along with a KH2, finishing with 2013 QSOs, 163 countries and multipliers, for over 652,000 points.

Naturally, participation is way, way up for this contest—everyone was expecting to have fun, and did. Naturally, at this point in the cycle, I'm only in the Top Ten with this score. But I'll take it, I'll take it....

--K4ZA

Other Contest Scores & News

Claude, NC4NC, also did the 10M contest, SOHP phone, managing 818 QSOs, with 54 states/provinces & 84 countries for 225K points.

W4WN reports the following CDXA club-competition scores for CQ WW CW: AA4R 818,495; W4WNT 94,848; W4SI 32,200; W4NZC 240,198; W4WN 333,547; AA4NN 1.418M (hip, hip!); N4ZC 651,508; & AE4PB operated, but at press time, Cliff didn't have Jerry's score.

It's good that we're getting some contest activity—especially without a local M-M station to drive the operating.

And don't forget to check out the profile of CDXA member K4MA, Jim Stevens, in the current NCJ. The headline for Jim's profile says, "New Blood in the Carolinas." Depending on your point of view, that will either frighten you or cause you to smile. Kudos to Jim on the writeup.

The Back Page

HAMFEST NEWS

Jan 23 (Saturday) Winston-Salem, NC
Feb 6 (Saturday) Charleston, SC Hamfest
Feb 21 (Sunday) Elkin Hamfest

WEB WANDERINGS

<http://www.qsl.net/ct1boh/propagat.html>

You'll find three graphs which will give you a very good idea of what to expect from propagation conditions in a very concise and quick way:

short historical graph of WWV numbers
short live hourly graph of K numbers
plot of live Aurora at the poles

plus, two links from WWV & NCDXF beacons.

Here's a list of sites for manuals. If you're into old gear, or need manuals (some are free; some are not), you should check:

<http://www.w7fg.com/manuals.txt>
<http://www.hi-manuals.com/>
<http://www.angelfire.com/nv/Avionics/Manual/collins.html>
<http://www.surplussales.com/Manuals/>
<ftp://bma.sbc.edu/boatanchor/>

A newly-created PacketCluster command reference site can be found at:

<http://www.cpcug.org/user/wfeidt/Cluster/index.html>
<http://www.his.com/~wfeidt/Cluster/index.html>

It's very simple to use. Just click on the command you're interested in; sub-commands are indented under their parent commands. The pages are derived from actual PacketCluster help screens, by permission of Dick Newell, AK1A.

While I don't know personally of anyone within CDXA who's into homebrewing gear, a site with over 280 links to other homebrew, building sites can be found at:

<http://www.musinc.com/bry/hamlyn/hamhomeb.htm>

Finally, does all this incessant talk about DXing & propagation leave you feeling frustrated? Are you still searching for something to replace those ties you got for Xmas? It's never too early to leave gift hints around the house, you know? Two worthwhile books for any DXer's library:

The Little Pistol's Guide to HF Propagation, by Bob Brown (NM7M) is available through its publisher, WorldRadio Books in Sacramento, CA; their phone number is 800-366-9192. *The New Shortwave Propagation Handbook*, by Jacobs, Cohen, & Rose is available from CQ Communications, publishers of CQ. (Most issues of the magazine carry ads.) More propagation websites include:

<http://www.sel.noaa.gov/info/index.html>
<http://www.sel.noaa.gov/radic/radio.html>
<http://hollv.cc.uleth.ca/solar/>
<http://www.dx1c.com/solar/>
<http://www.ips.gov.au/>

You can, of course, spend hours searching stuff on the web. Literally wandering the aisles of a vast, electronic library. It's almost as much fun as tuning around for hours on end. Until next time...

FOR SALE

Henry 2M FM amp. Model 130A20, 5-20 watts in / 130 watts out.	\$85
CDE HAM-III Antenna rotor and control box	\$150
6M Heathkit with two 572B tubes. <i>Instructions to complete 6M conversion.</i>	\$200
2M FAA conversion, model 6155. 8930 tube final. 400 watts with all relays & switches	\$250 or best offer
2M mast-mounted pre-amp. Tokyo Hy-Power Labs Model HRA-2. 150 watts.	\$135
1/4" Guy Wire. Approximately 1600 feet. Multiple rolls, various lengths:	
135' (3), 160' (2), 175' (2), 150' (2) Stronger than normally-used 3/16"	\$300
Rohn HBX 48 five 8-ft sections	\$290
MFJ 484B Grand Master Keyer	\$50
Tokyo Hy-Power 2M Amp HL-30V 1 in / 5 out OR 10 in / 35 out	\$50

Yaesu FT-90DM HF rig, solid state with two 6146 tubes in final.

\$1100 INCLUDES:

- FV-101Z External VFO
- FTV-901R 6M / 2M / 432 transverter (all three modules installed)
- SP-901P Speaker / Phone Patch
- FC-901 3 position Antenna Tuner (power output dial needs repair)

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